

**MINUTES OF THE
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 26, 2002**

The Proficiency Testing Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Tuesday, February 26, 2002, at 1:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by Chairperson Ms. Barbara Burmeister of the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. A list of action items is given in Attachment A and the list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to address items of importance identified in the committee's previously distributed meeting agenda.*

INTRODUCTION

The teleconference was started by Ms. Burmeister taking the attendance roll call.

AGENDA/MINUTES/ACTION ITEM REVIEW

Minutes of the February 12, 2002, teleconference were reviewed and accepted as written. The action items were reviewed and status shown on Attachment B.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Revised Field of Proficiency Testing Tables

PT Reporting Limits (PTRL) Subcommittee Report - Ms. Marykay Steinman reported on the subcommittee meeting held on February 21, 2002. During that meeting it was determined to submit PTRL information with guidance footnotes for posting to the NELAC website. She also reported that some terminology still needs to be clarified and that is currently being done by the subcommittee. It was decided by the PT Committee that there will be no changes at this time to the PTRLs. This topic should be reviewed and finalized at the March 12, 2002 PT teleconference. The PTRLs will then be posted to the NELAC website.

Ms. Steinman also reported that the subcommittee extensively discussed the current list of fields of proficiency testing with no agreement or resolution with regard to the type and concentration levels of PT samples listed. The committee is aware that current PT samples do not meet the needs of all laboratories. PT samples at different concentration levels would help but accreditation would also be needed by concentration level. It was agreed that this is a long-term problem for both the PT program and the Program, Policy and Structure Committee with no immediate resolution. This topic was put on the list of long-term issues to be resolved by the joint committees.

A comment from Mr. Mike Dancziger regarding reporting of results below the target value of the PT samples was received by the PTRL subcommittee and discussed by the PT Committee. Based on the discussion, it was decided that further information regarding the initial development of the PTRLs was required before a response could be made. The committee will finalize a response at the next teleconference.

Radiochemistry FOT Subcommittee Report - Dr. John Griggs reported that the subcommittee teleconference call originally scheduled for earlier this week had been postponed for one week. The EPA Criteria Document for Radiochemistry had been distributed to the subcommittee members for

review and discussion at the subcommittee teleconference. Dr. Griggs will report on this topic at the PT Committee teleconference scheduled for March 12, 2002.

Problematic Analytes and Acceptance Criteria Update

Status of PT Study Data Received - Ms. Barbara Burmeister reported that she has now received data from four PT Providers and is awaiting data from three more. She stated that she has given the PT Providers a deadline of March 8, 2002, to submit this information for inclusion into the evaluation study.

Master Plan for Evaluation of Data - Ms. Burmeister stated that Mr. Tom Coyner will recalculate the data received and conduct a comparison with the current regression acceptance criteria. It was suggested that a subcommittee should be formed to review the results and make recommendations to the committee. Ms. Burmeister suggested the subcommittee include Mr. Tom Coyner, Mr. Matthew Caruso, Mr. Chuck Wibby, and Mr. Ralph Obenauf who initially developed the NELAC Fields of Proficiency Testing table and also include a representative from the EPA, ERA and a statistician. Ms. Burmeister will contact Mr. Ray Wesselmann of EPA-Cincinnati for suggestions of qualified candidates who were involved in the development of the initial EPA regression equations.

Status of Technology Codes

Dr. Tom McAninch reported that the subcommittee developed a 6-digit technology code format. The first two digits designate the primary technology, the second two digits designate a secondary technology, and the third two digits reflect the sequential number differentiating within a specific group. He reported that Program, Policy & Structure (PP&S) Committee developed a list of eight basic technical groups with one catch-all group. Ms. Rae Ann Haynes has submitted several questions for further discussion by the subcommittee to finalize the technology codes. Dr. McAninch distributed the first draft of the technology codes for review and comments by the PT Committee. After receiving comments and/or suggestions, Dr. McAninch will redraft and redistribute the second draft of this list for further review and discussion by the PT Committee.

Status of Additions to Master Analyte and Method Code Lists

Dr. Obenauf reported that additions to the master analyte and method code lists are still in progress. A progress report will be given during the March 26th teleconference.

Status of Revised "Six Month" FAQ

The redraft of the FAQ was sent by Ms. Haynes to the PT Committee on January 23, 2002 for review. It was noted that Ms. Steinman had submitted a different version dated February 13, 2002 to Ms. Burmeister who will distribute it to the PT Committee. Ms. Haynes will present the FAQ to the AAs for discussion and report back to the PT Committee at the next teleconference. The goal is to finalize the FAQ during that teleconference.

Comments/Questions Received

Follow-up to Scott Hoatson Comment Regarding PT Passing Requirement Interpretation - Ms. Burmeister stated that the topic of this comment is no longer an issue and it has been resolved within the NELAP AA group. She will notify Ms. Jeanne Hankins of this resolution.

Follow-up to Tom Coyner Comment Regarding Method Code vs Method Description - It was reported by Ms. Burmeister that the method description, not the method code, is the problem when the PT providers electronically submit PT data to accrediting authorities. The PT Providers are required to report the method description provided by the laboratory and cannot change it. The committee needs to find a mechanism for PT providers to use both the standardized method codes and method descriptions. A suggestion was made to have PT providers send method codes and method descriptions with PT studies. It was suggested that EPA include the NELAC method codes and descriptions in the Criteria Document. Ms. Burmeister will contact Ms. Pat Hurr, EPA, regarding this issue.

Follow-up to Vanaja Sivakumar Comment Regarding Louisiana Electronic Data Requirements - Ms. Burmeister reported that she has been in contact with Mr. Louis Johnson who issued the letter with the Louisiana requirements. He stated that a revised letter will be issued to PT providers asking for the use of NELAC analyte and method codes.

Greg Jones, Atlanta, GA – PT Frequency and Acceptance Criteria - Mr. Greg Jones submitted a comment asking to reduce the number of PT studies per year based on the laboratory's volume of work. The committee discussed this comment stating that there cannot be two standards, one for large and one for small laboratories. There must be a level playing field regardless of size of lab. However, this issue is an overall NELAC problem, not only limited to the PT program. Mr. Jones also feels that the evaluation process needs to be reviewed so that acceptance limits correspond with routine control limits. The committee stated that PTs are developed independent of method limits. QC ranges are wider so calibration does not have to be run as often. PT is a test of performance. The committee is re-evaluating the current acceptance criteria and take control limits into consideration. It was also noted that some acceptance criteria are regulated by the EPA (e.g. SDWA) and listed in the *Federal Register* and cannot be changed.

Mark Carter, ERA – Ongoing Monitoring of PT Providers - Mr. Carter submitted some suggestions for the need for ongoing monitoring of PT providers. Since it is the responsibility of NELAC to establish the criteria for ongoing monitoring of PT providers (Chapter 2, Appendix D, Section D.4.b), Ms. Burmeister suggested that a subcommittee be formed to accomplish this. Dr. Mike Miller and Dr. Ralph Obenauf volunteered and Dr. Obenauf will lead the subcommittee. Suggestions for additional members included Carol Madding from EPA, a representative from ERA and another state person. Dr. Obenauf will contact these people for their interest.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned as the allotted teleconference time expired.

NEXT MEETING

The next PT Committee teleconference is scheduled for March 12, 2002, at 1:00 p.m., EST.

**ACTION ITEMS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 26, 2002**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1	PT Reporting Limit Subcommittee Report to PT Committee and response to Dancziger comment (Steinman)	03/12/02
2	Develop Technology Codes (McAninch, Mudambi, Griggs)	03/12/02
3	Respond to analyte and method code comment (Obenauf)	03/26/02
4	Schedule a meeting of the quick response PT subcommittee and report progress to PT Committee (Mudambi)	03/12/02
5	Establish a subcommittee on radiochemistry PT and discuss radiochemistry acceptance criteria (Griggs)	03/12/02
6	Email final request to PT Providers for data (Burmeister)	03/08/02
7	Propose new language for QC standards analysis issue. (Burmeister)	03/26/02
8	Contact Mr. Ray Wesselmann for interest in FOT subcommittee. (Burmeister)	ASAP
9	Distribute Ms. Steinman 02/13/02 version of FAQ to PT Committee for review (Burmeister)	ASAP
10	Review and finalize “six month” FAQ for posting to NELAC website (Haynes)	03/12/02
11	Contact Ms. Hankins regarding resolution to Scott Hoatson’s comment (Burmeister)	ASAP
12	Contact Ms. Pat Hurr regarding use of NELAC method codes and method descriptions (Burmeister)	ASAP
13	Establish a subcommittee to develop ongoing monitoring criteria for PT providers. (Obenauf)	03/26/02

**PARTICIPANTS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
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Name	Affiliation	Address
Burmeister, Barbara, Chairperson	Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene	T: (608) 265-1100 F: (608) 265-1114 E: burmie@mail.slh.wisc.edu
Griggs, John	USEPA/OAR	T: (334) 270-3450 F: (334) 270-3454 E: griggs.john@epa.gov
Haynes, RaeAnn	State of Oregon DEQ	T: (503) 229-5983 F: (503) 229-6924 E: haynes.raeann@deq.state.or.us
Jackson, Larry (absent)	Environmental Quality Management	T: (603) 924-6852 F: (603) 924-6346 E: lpjackson@msn.com
McAninch, Tom	Eastman Chemical Company	T: (903)237-5473 F: (903)237-6395 E: twmcan@eastman.com
Miller, Michael	NJ DEP - Lab Certification Office of QA	T: (609) 633-2804 F: (609) 777-1774 E: mmiller1@dep.state.nj.us
Mudambi, Anand (absent)	US Army Corps of Engineers	T: (703) 603-8796 F: (703) 603-9112 E: mudambi.anand@epa.gov
Obenauf, Ralph	SPEX CertiPrep, Inc.	T: (732) 549-7144 F: (732) 603-9647 E: robenauf@spexcsp.com
Steinman, Marykay	M.J. Reider Associates, Inc.	T: (610)374-5129 F: (610)374-7234 E: msteinman@mjureider.com
Brediger, Arlyn (contractor support)	Anteon Corporation	T: (702) 731-4233 F: (702) 731-4027 E: abrediger@anteon.com